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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

PHAON AND SAPPHO, AND LYRICAL POEMS. Penzance, 1891.

PHAON AND SAPPHO, AND NIMROD. (MACMILLAN & Co.) 1892.

VESRES BY THE WAY. (METHUEN & Co.) 1893.

A MONK'S LOVE, AND OTHER POEMS. (HENDERSON.) 1894.

TIMES.—"His poetic gift is indisputable."

GLASGOW HERALD.—"He shows independence and individuality; and if he does remind us of his Elizabethan leader, it is always worthily. His endowments of fancy and imagination are abundantly manifested in both plays. 'Phaon and Sappho' is a noble testimony to his poetic genius."

SCOTSMAN.—"His work shows imaginative power of no mean order; and the dramatic form is plastic in his hands, and takes on the shape of passion, humour, or philosophy, as the play goes. In either play the poetic level which the plot takes and holds is high, notwithstanding the natural lightness of the comic scenes, and the action is full of movement, restless, and advancing to a crisis. The Theatre deals nowadays in less exalted work; but every lover of poetry will welcome the book, and read it with unqualified pleasure."

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DAILY CHRONICLE.—"Of the author of 'Phaon and Sappho' and 'Nimrod,' Mr. Gladstone has written: 'I am greatly impressed with his gifts.'"

MR. ANDREW LANG, in *Longman's*.—"His knowledge and skill should have a fairer chance; and surely in a country like ours it ought not to be very difficult to secure the chance for such a meritorious student and artist."

THE SPECTATOR.—"He deserves the praise of having studied under the best master. There are fine things in both of these plays."

ATHENÆUM.—"'Phaon and Sappho' and 'Nimrod' give the conviction that he has real talent, and real poetic feeling and taste."

ACADEMY.—"These poems are not wayside lyrics or country idylls; they are real attempts at the drama in its Shaksperian form. Both plays are full of action, but fuller still of a kind of fiery meditation."

ATHENÆUM.—"The interest of these poems lies in their thoughtfulness, their poetic picturesqueness, and the justice and dignity of their language."

MR. W. L. COURTNEY, in *Daily Telegraph*.—"'A Monk's Love, and Other Poems,' is wholly admirable, and worthy of the author of 'Phaon and Sappho' and 'Nimrod,' especially perhaps a long and beautiful poem to Francesca di Rimini, and a lyric of more than usual excellence entitled 'To the Night.' We catch not a few notes of song from the Elizabethan time of Spenser and his 'Faerie Queen.'"

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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

AND

BELPHEGOR

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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

AND

BELPHEGOR

BY

JAMES DRYDEN HOSKEN

LONDON

H. HENRY AND CO. LTD.

93 *ST. MARTIN'S LANE W.C.*

1896

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Fine money.

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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

A Tragedy

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PERSONS REPRESENTED

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE (*The Dramatic Poet*)
BATEMAN
CONDELL, HUGHES } (*Actors*)
ARMYN, COWLEY } (*Two Tavern Idlers*)
NIMBLE (*A Watchman*)
MARGARET (*Marlowe's Hostess*)
ESTHER (*Her Daughter*)
KITTY BRAWN
People belonging to the Theatre
Frequenters of the Tabard Inn, and others

Scene: London

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CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

A Tragedy

ACT I SCENE I

A ROOM IN THE TABARD INN

ARMYN *and* COWLEY *discovered sitting at a table playing cards.* NIMBLE *looking on.* HUGHES *and* CONDELL *are seen drinking at another table.*

CONDELL. This tale of Faustus which we played to-day
Touches a keynote in the public mind

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That makes it popular. Herein the skill
Of our young Master Marlowe shows itself
To most admired advantage, and the play
He hath so shapened to his higher thought
That every good point is still better made
By his invisible art, that works its end
Like providence and nature, secretly,
Leaving no trace of the artificer.
How excellent it is!

HUGHES. The work is good;
The artist still above it in all praise!
The mind with which he works gives common things
Nobility and life: we mar his lines
Having not his secret. He is late to-day.
The very powers of a god are his
To storm and pluck life's pleasures.

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CONDELL. There he fails.
To me it seems the heavenly spark he holds
Is dimmed and spoiled by contact with the world,
Or I should say—its dregs. He plays the heir
To a vast property, and squanders it
Upon a worthless set.

HUGHES. It follows not.
I think the free and open life he lives
Is necessary to him. His young thought,
Now putting forth its earliest fruit, demands
An infinite and rich experience;
And only he who sins as deep as hell,
And hopes as high as heaven, wins mastery
To sway the subject-currents of the world
This way or that. All excellence depends
On some defect for its development.
So we have Marlowe!

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CONDELL. Would he threw away
The worthless fellowship of Robert Greene,
Who hurls the mounting spirit of our Mage
Prone on a dung-heap world! That Robert Greene
Makes of himself a rank iniquity
To flout at heaven. He carries in his life
An intellectual leprosy that takes
A growing hold upon young Marlowe's mind,
And twists him from his native, grander bent.
A poet should be free, serene; as nature
He should be happy, and his music such
As ripples o'er succeeding healthy hours;
The lights and shadows which his story takes
Should fall as lightly from him as the flakes
A wintry heaven sheds earthward. Such a one
Within the glass of observation rose

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When Marlowe passed; but now he takes to him
The gloomy tenor of his own deep strains,
While Greene, the prompter to the poet's part,
Still ready, gives the cue.

NIMBLE. Sam's thinking 'bout last night. Mind your tricks.

COWLEY. No; you're wrong, old boy, for once.

ARMYN. I heard Sam was up here in th' street somewhere last night asking Emma to forgive him.

COWLEY. Well, if you don't beat Tom Pepper, you two—for lies! Are you going to play, Jack Armyn?

ARMYN. Yes.

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COWLEY. Very well, then; shut up.

ARMYN. What was 't you heard, Nimble?

NIMBLE. Well, I heard—of course I wouldn't say 'twas true—that Sam borrowed the price of a few odd potations of her, and that Emma lent him money on the promise that he would marry her.

COWLEY. Here you, Jack Armyn and Nimble, what do you want?

NIMBLE. All I know is, that last night, as I was a-doing my last round, and coming round by th' Tabard pump, all at once I seed something that were not big and were not small by th' pump. "It's a harse," said I; but 'tweren't a harse. "It's a bit o' shadow-like," said I; but 'tweren't a shadow. Then I thought 'twas a walking nightmare or a strayed ghost. Then

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I went a little closer, and a foul wind blew a smell in my nose. Then I said, "It's a wine-cask." Then I crept a little more nearer, and I saw 'twas a man with his arms round the pump a-kissing it—fancy that!—a-kissing a pump—like lunatics! Then I heard it say, "Oh, Emma dear! how I love you!" Then it a-kissed again. "Oh, Emma dear! lend me a trifle to save life."

COWLEY. It's a d——d lie!

NIMBLE. Now, Armyn, did I say 'twas our beloved friend Cowley?

ARMYN. No, that you didn't.

COWLEY. Here you, Jack Armyn and Nimble, what do you want?

NIMBLE. We're only having a comforting talk, are we?

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ARMYN. No.

NIMBLE. Are we, Cowley?

COWLEY. Well, no.

(*Shouts and uproar heard in other parts of the house.*)

CONDELL. Since we have taken to the Tabard, we are followed by the whole hanging-on set of the theatre. Hark! that's Quinion the Clown outside!

ARMYN. Cowley, how long did you serve in th' Low Country warfare?

COWLEY. Two year an' just over.

(*Noise outside increases.*)

NIMBLE. That was th' time when he turned ballad-maker, and wrote home to his mother, in a postscribe—

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Give my love to Emma dear,
And tell her not to weep,
For she is often in my thoughts
When I am fast asleep.

COWLEY. It's a d——d lie!

(COWLEY *rushes at* NIMBLE; ARMYN *thrusts himself between them, and the three fall over the table on to the floor. In the midst of the confusion, a great number of people belonging to the theatre and the Tabard Inn press into the room, preceded by one of their number dressed as a clown; one of the foremost carries a tub.*)

FIRST SPEAKER. Come, Quinion the Clown, mount on the tub; you shall be our king.

SECOND SPEAKER. I'll be your king, if you'll

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support me, Nichodemus Fluid, while I read th' Institution.

FIRST SPEAKER. I, Nichodemus Fluid, will be your support.

(*The Second Speaker gets on the tub.*)

SECOND SPEAKER. Will you stop that row?

ALL. Silence! Silence!

SECOND SPEAKER. I wish you would keep silence with less noise there. You can stop up your ears for what I care, so you will hear me speak.

FIRST SPEAKER. That's fair! And you can all go away if you don't want to hear, and a' will speak to those left behind.

SECOND SPEAKER. When I'm king you shall pick your wives from the best, true as three and four make eight.

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FIRST SPEAKER. Seven.

SECOND SPEAKER. Yes, seven wives, if you will.

ALL. Let him say on!

SECOND SPEAKER. Are we not ground down, men?

ALL. Yes!

SECOND SPEAKER. That's how we're so sharp.

FIRST SPEAKER. Draw nearer, friends. Tell 'em what we shall have.

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no more government, but we will all live under our own government."

ALL. That's very good.

SECOND SPEAKER. Yes; what's the good of government to us? It's only good for those that line their pockets by it.

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FIRST SPEAKER. Order, friends. There's more to come; this is but a nut to——

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no more laws, but we will all live law-abiding subjects without 'em! And th' lawyers shall be put middle men on our boys' seesaws, because they can turn th' balance any way."

ALL. Bravo!

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no more armies, but each one shall fight for thirselves."

FIRST SPEAKER. That'll save th' taxes.

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no more money."

ALL. Nay, nay; that's wrong.

SECOND SPEAKER. Not so, neighbours. There shall be nothing bought, then.

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ALL. That's a good law.

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no work done."

ALL. No, there shall not! That's th' best!

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no inequality."

ALL. True! We'll burn him!

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no more taxes."

ALL. No! We'll keep 'em for ourselves.

SECOND SPEAKER. "Item. There shall be no learned ones."

ALL. That's a wise law.

SECOND SPEAKER. "There shall be no more providence."

ALL. Nay; that's wrong.

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SECOND SPEAKER. Well, if there must be, things will be just the same. (*Uproar.*)

CONDELL. This is a vulgar interpretation of some of Marlowe's positions.

HUGHES. How did Quinion get hold of this?

CONDELL. Marlowe is too open with his thoughts.

(*The uproar increases. Ostlers and others enter and clear the room of the mob.* ARMYN, COWLEY, *and* NIMBLE *rise and follow the others out.* MARLOWE *enters from the other side. He is unsteady and excited in his movements; he comes forward and drops into a chair.*)

MARLOWE. This life! This life!

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CONDELL. Why, Marlowe, what's the matter?

MARLOWE. Ha! Condell? Hughes?
The matter? Why, the matter, gentle friends,
Is briefly this: there is a certain fool,
A certain fool who doth offend me much;
Men call him Marlowe, and he calls himself
A waster of his life—a very fool!

CONDELL. I never heard you speak like this before.

MARLOWE. I would you had though—oh, I would you had!
Where the good promises of time should stand
Upon the fair-set pages of my youth,
That fool hath with the pen of folly writ
Deformed imaginations, and rude things,
And blinded with the hours of dull debauch

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The heaven-exploring eye of mounting thought.
This tedious fool must go!

HUGHES. What wonder's this?

MARLOWE. Beside our minds and what they do intend,
This little fraction of a life is nought—
A passing light—brief as the thrill of love,
Or a good purpose in an evil breast,
Fragile as beauty, and as mutable
As insects' hours. Ah! the remorse of it!
My life made incense offered to the god
Of public praise. That I should be content
To rule this little realm, and fill the air
With echoes of myself, when I should scale
The mountain regions and survey that land
The patient mind intends to journey through!
My life has been a "bravo!"

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CONDELL. That it has;
And I am glad to note this mood in you,
For reformation is not far away
When once dissatisfaction with our lives
Gets entrance to our breasts. Be patient, Kit,
And do not spurn my well-intentioned words.
I am your elder; add to that a man
With honest admiration for your work,
And one who does not care to see this waste
Of prodigal power. Youth comes but once; if lost
Through our neglect, the tedious tale of life
Is coloured by the loss. I'll say good night!

HUGHES. Good night.

MARLOWE. Good night to both.

(*Exeunt* CONDELL *and* HUGHES.)

Condell's an honest fellow. What, all gone?

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Here's time and place for necessary thought.
How giddy and inconstant grows this mind,
That like a dog runs thrice its journey o'er
By deviating from the common way!
'Tis probable that I may yet do much.
Oh, probable! Why, probability
Is a dead ass, a bubble, a strange star,
A winter blast in June, a summer flower
On Christmas day, a wooden horse and Troy,
A Hannibal melting the mighty Alps
With vinegar, Friar Bacon's brazen head,
Or his fond boast unto the Macedonian,
Who from Mount Athos begged to carve his form.
Oh! when that probable slips from my tongue,
So soaring is the spirit of young power

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That I exclaim in wantonness of words,
All things are possible! The mind is quick,
And catches the approaching signs of things.
Men shall plant colonies beneath the sea,
Making the world rich with its hidden wealth;
Send their intelligence throughout all time,
To comprehend what's past, and apprehend
That which will be; change Nature's face by art,
And hold communication with the stars.
From the vocabulary of the world
The word "impossible" will be erased,
And wonder like a dream of night will pale
Into the light of truth. Go, probable!
I'll rather say that I will yet do much,
And bid the weary life I lead, farewell!
I now must choose my course.

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(KITTY BRAWN, *singing outside.*)

SONG.

Life is but an April day,
Love is but a flower;
All things beautiful decay
In a passing hour.
Time both takes and gives to all,
All must laugh and weep;
Evermore we seem to call
In a troubled sleep.

(*Enter* BATEMAN *and* K. BRAWN.)

BATEMAN. Where have you been, Kit?

MARLOWE. In the moon—the moon.

BATEMAN. The moon? What saw you?

MARLOWE. Fools and spoils of time.
Let me remember what I saw i' th' moon.

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All broken vows are tied in bundles there,
And Truth, the nightmare of the world, though fair,
Is packed within a tiny mustard-seed,
While man thanks heaven that he is from it freed.
There Justice, flying from a lawyer's rage,
Hath built herself a peaceful hermitage:
Next self-denying Faith and true Religion
Have sought the moon, a dove and carrier-pigeon;
There also has withdrawn the true solution
Of Life and Death, vexed by our thoughts' pollution.
There appreciation of true merit lies,
And Common-sense doth wink his worldly eyes.

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The Phœnix, and Lot's wife, and Noah's ark,
The cloven foot, and tail o' th' devil dark,
The true cross, and lost wisdom of antiquity
Lie rotting with exemptions from iniquity.
There too the hour-glass and the scythe of Time
Lie superannuated in their prime.
The mighty key that winds up the machine
Of the vast universe may there be seen.
There the divine reflection long since maimed
And the left hand of Providence are framed.
But the old throne, and sword of Nimrod there,
The highest place of honour share,
With the original mitre, staff, and skeeter
Used by that apostolic power Saint Peter.

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BATEMAN. 'Tis rare, Kit, rare!

MARLOWE. Strange things are there indeed.
Marlowe's old life will soon be there as well.

K. BRAWN. He is your fellow-lodger, is he not?

BATEMAN. Yes, Kitty. (*Aside*) But I would he were not, though.
Between me, and the object of my love,
This fellow stands at present!

K. BRAWN. (*Aside.*) Woman's faith!
What woman would not be content with life
If she won Marlowe? (*Clock strikes.*)

BATEMAN. Why, 'tis twelve o'clock.
We start another day.

MARLOWE. (*Suddenly facing them.*) Another life!

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SCENE II

A ROOM IN MARGARET'S HOUSE

ESTHER *discovered sewing and singing.*

SONG.

There's a hope with every morning,
And a fear with every eve;
And love hath no time for scorning,
Nor hath youth a heart to grieve.
Then oh! sing oh!
Love's in his prime,
And age and time
He doth not know.
Sing oh!

ESTHER. This knot will break the thread.
How sweet is life!
How very sweet to live such days as these

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Of rich content, and easy-granted wants!
Oh, happy days! wherein I work and dream,
And hope that all the days to come for me
May still be like you! (*Enter* MARGARET.)

MARGARET. How soon I tire now!
(*Sits down.*)
There was a time, though, I remember it,
When not the longest day of all the year
Found me at sundown wearier than at morn.
That's long past now. The days are but two ends,
So short's the light for any household work.
Why, you're a long time stitching on that gown.
You have been reading.

ESTHER. I? No, mother dear.

MARGARET. What a long time young Marlowe lies abed!

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There's Mister Bateman up and out of doors.
These stage-play writers, they are all alike;
They have no thrift, and take things as they come.

ESTHER. But, mother——

MARGARET. You would say he's clever? True;
And Mistress Weaver said the other day
I should be very proud of such a lodger.
Well, so I am; but, after all is said,
Bateman's the steadier man. No, not a moment—
A single moment can I sit me down!
There's Marlowe coming down to breakfast now.
They turn day into night—night into day.
I'm old for such a life. (*Exit.*)

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ESTHER. Mother! She's gone.
Well, by-and-by will do; I'll tell her then.
Why, what a glorious morning fills the earth
With comfortable light! Sad now in sooth?
I could as soon begin to think of death,
As fancy that a sorrow clave to me.
Only last night! It seems an age since then—
A rapturous period crowded with full years
Of happy heart-beats! (*Enter* BATEMAN.)

BATEMAN. Ha! good morrow, Esther.

ESTHER. Good morrow, sir. What, tired of the day,
That you return so soon?

BATEMAN. Tired of all
Such days, and nights as I am breathing through.
May I sit down? Small relish have I left
For anything.

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ESTHER. I'm sorry for you, sir.
It seems to me, a simple, homely girl,
That life is something better each new day,
And each succeeding hour as 'twere a gem
Exceeding those that went before, in value,
I wear upon my heart.

BATEMAN. Happy are you.

ESTHER. And so can you be, if—— There,
that's my way;
Pardon my silly talk.

BATEMAN. Go on: if what?

ESTHER. Oh, nothing, sir.

BATEMAN. Then let me finish for you.
And so can I be, if—— You mark me?

ESTHER. Yes.

BATEMAN. And so could I be happy, Esther
—listen—

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If—— Why, it is no shame that I would speak;
And yet I lack the art to plead my case,
And so I fear to lose it, wanting skill.
I can be free and noisy in the world,
But here the silence of some holy thing
Chains up my tongue, and out of order throws
My oft-prepared words, leaving me here
Poor with one rich but simple old-time phrase—
I love you, Esther!

ESTHER. (*Rising.*) Oh! sir, sir! I must go.
What have you said?

BATEMAN. What I will say again. Oh! do not go!
I love you, and it seems my very life
Has made a bargain with despair and death,
That if I do not win you I must die.

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Do you not think that you can learn to care
A little for me? It will grow to love.
Think ere you speak.

ESTHER. 'Tis needless. Never, sir!

BATEMAN. Think what you say. How many weary days
Have I sat here and watched you at your work,
My eye the slave of all your daily tasks,
My soul all ears to catch your words and songs,
Ay, and your very breathing! If you say
You cannot learn to love me, you make empty
The world and time for me, and leave me bare
Within an awful region, where I shrink
To look upon myself.

(MARLOWE *and* MARGARET *enter unperceived behind.*)

ESTHER. What shall I do!

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BATEMAN. What reason is there why you cannot love me?

ESTHER. I may not speak it.

(MARLOWE *comes suddenly forward*)

MARLOWE. But you may.

ESTHER. Oh! Marlowe.

(*She bursts into tears.*)

MARLOWE. Perhaps I have the right to answer you.

The reason why she cannot love you, sir,
Is, that last night she gave her hand to me,
And she is mine! What now?

BATEMAN. Hostess, farewell!
I'll send my man to bring away my things.
Here is your rent. Well, Marlowe—no, not now!
Some other time. (*Rushes out of the room.*)

MARGARET. And I not know of this!

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Well there, 'tis still the way. Come, Esther darling,
You almost make me weep to see you so.

ESTHER. Mother, 'tis true.

MARGARET. I am confused; come in.

MARLOWE. Thus have I found my newer, nobler life!

END OF ACT I

ACT II SCENE I

A ROOM IN THE TABARD INN

ARMYN, COWLEY, *and* NIMBLE *discovered drinking together.*

COWLEY. There's no life about the place now Kit Marlowe's given up coming here.

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NIMBLE. You're right; times is altering. I know when th' little inside room there, afore the drawing counter was altered—when that little inside room was packed every night. There was Andrew Wright what used to play on the flute, and old Swivel with his fiddle, and Dick Purvis, an' half th' boys of South'ark, used to come here. Ah! those times is gone.

ARMYN. Gone for ever, Nimble. And now Marlowe's gone too.

(*Enter* HUGHES.)

NIMBLE. What news?

HUGHES. Condell is dead.

ARMYN. Condell?

COWLEY. Dead?

HUGHES. Died in a fit only an hour ago.

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(*Enter* MARLOWE.)

MARLOWE. What's this I hear, Hughes? As I came along
I heard a talk that Condell had been found
Dead in his lodging, so I hastened here
In search of you to know if it be true.

HUGHES. 'Tis true. He was found dead an hour ago.
Died in a fit, it seems.

MARLOWE. Poor Condell dead!

(BATEMAN *and* K. BRAWN *enter behind.*)

He had few friends, I think?

HUGHES. You might say none
Outside his fellow-actors.

MARLOWE. No wife or child?

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HUGHES. No kindred that I ever heard
him speak of.
He came to London early in his youth.
MARLOWE. Condell no more! He was a
reverend man
Towards those rites which I so often scoffed,
And I will undertake his funeral
As far as any means I have allow.
I know the house he lodged in; Hughes, to-
night
We'll go together there.
HUGHES. Then I will go,
And get some little matters off my hand,
And after that call for you. (*Exit.*)
NIMBLE. I'm glad to see you back again,
Master Marlowe.
COWLEY. So is Sam Cowley.

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ARMYN. And Jack Armyn. It's like old times

MARLOWE. But I shall never meet with you again

As I have done; my life has ta'en a turn.
Take it not ill, lads; there must come a time
When we must face the future. I have been
Too wasteful of my days.

ARMYN. Drink farewell with us, then.

MARLOWE. No, lads, not now.

COWLEY. Not now? When then, Master Marlowe? That's not fellowship. You had our company for what 'tis worth, and sought it of your own free will.

MARLOWE. I know it, lads, I know it; but——

NIMBLE. Well, Master Marlowe, cannot you give us one farewell evening?

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MARLOWE. I'll think of it.

COWLEY. Better decide now, yes or no.

MARLOWE. I would not offend you, lads, by denying you anything in reason; but——

NIMBLE. Come, Master Marlowe, let's have no "buts," but one farewell supper together, and then let's part fair an' square.

MARLOWE. Very well, then; one farewell night together.

ARMYN. That's like a man! Now when shall it be?

MARLOWE. Let me see—on Friday next, will that do?

NIMBLE. Our time is yours.

MARLOWE. Very well; I'll see our host about it.

K. BRAWN. And may I come as well?

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MARLOWE. Ha! Kitty, yes.

BATEMAN. And Bateman too?

MARLOWE. Why, Bateman? Certainly.
I have not seen you since——

BATEMAN. No more of that.
Marlowe, I tell you to your very face,
I am your enemy; beware of me.
A man who's robbed of all feels little love
For him who robbed him.

K. BRAWN. (*Aside to* MARLOWE) Marlowe, you were wont
To see me oft'ner. Once you made me think
That I—the street-girl—Kitty Brawn—the sinner
Against the household purities of life,
Was something more to you than one who gave
An evil hour to you. I love you yet,

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And do not blush to speak it in your face.
You have won her whom Bateman doted on,
And I loved you as much as you love her,
And more than she, poor fool! can ever do,
And for no other reason than revenge
Do I now blow the spark of Bateman's loss.

MARLOWE. I dare you speak of her whom I have won.

K. BRAWN. And why not, pray? She is the same as I.
How know you she is better than I am?

MARLOWE. You slanderous devil! Do I know myself?
Yet wherefore should I vex myself with you?
You are a pair of fools!

K. BRAWN. Of enemies.

(*Exeunt* K. BRAWN *and* BATEMAN.)

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MARLOWE. This is the penalty a man must pay
For having played the fool. One farewell night,
And I am quit of all the wretched crew.
I do not think that Bateman will be there,
Nor Brawn; but if they come, I'll do my best
To make the night pass by in harmony.

(*Enter* ESTHER *timidly. After looking around hurriedly, she sees* MARLOWE, *and exclaims in a suppressed voice,* "*Oh! God be thanked!*" *She then sinks sobbing into a chair.*)

MARLOWE. Why, Esther, what is this?
Why in this place? Alone?

ESTHER. 'Tis nothing, Kit.
Yet for my credit must I tell you why
I sought this place. A rumour reached my ear,
A dreadful rumour of a sudden death—

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A player, or a writer, so I think—
And—so—I—came.

MARLOWE. Sweet, thinking it was me.
Why, what a foolish trembler!

ESTHER. Yet I would
That you had not discovered me, and I
Had learned the truth without your knowing it.
And yet I would not neither, now 'tis o'er.
I must be gone. My mother is alone,
Agape with wonder at my sudden flight.
I must be gone.

MARLOWE. And I will go with you.

(*As they are going*, K. BRAWN *and* BATEMAN *re-enter. They confront each other.*)

K. BRAWN. What do I see? Another girl with Kit!

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This is the fourteenth wench within this month
That he hath had! (*To* ESTHER) And to speak virtuously,
How long have you ta'en up the life of shame?

MARLOWE. Aside! thou shameless thing.

K. BRAWN. Oh! now I see:
This is your spotless queen of purity.

BATEMAN. Spotless, say you? How some men are deceived!

ESTHER. Oh! Oh!

(*Sinking with emotion against the wall.*)

MARLOWE. You dog! Thing worse than any words can name!

(MARLOWE *rushes on* BATEMAN, *knocks him down, and stands over him with a drawn sword in act to*

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strike. Exit K. BRAWN, *crying "Murder.")*

ESTHER. (*In a voice of terror.*) Marlowe! Marlowe! for my sake!

(MARLOWE *stops short in the act, looks at* ESTHER, *then flings the sword away with a suppressed groan.*)

SCENE II

A ROOM IN MARGARET'S HOUSE

MARLOWE *and* ESTHER *discovered.* MARLOWE *now and then running over the strings of a guitar which he holds.*

ESTHER. So, Kit, to-morrow will be New Year's day.

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MARLOWE. Yes, dearest, and next week—turn not away—
This little Esther will be Marlowe's wife.
Come now: my favourite song.
ESTHER. What, Kit! again?
MARLOWE. Again, and yet again; what can we do
More fitting this fair season of our hopes
Than to unlock the door of happy thoughts
With old-time songs well suited to our state?
The day is failing, and this time was made
To touch our souls with beauty and content,
And give us glimpses of our better selves—
Still regions, holy quiet, and that charm
Within whose circle elemental thought
Takes wings, and doth enlarge the narrowing rim

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Of this dim world of days, and failing
breath,
And perishable blooms, and falling seas,
And all this wondrous frame, this realm of
time
We people for a moment.
ESTHER. Still discourse,
And I will lie and listen, till I hear
The very beating of the heart of God.
MARLOWE. Come. (*He plays.*)

SONG.

MARLOWE.

Will you bid me sing to-morrow
The song I sang to-day?
Will you charm away my sorrow
In your fitful, fairy way?

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Yes, you will? but still remember,
And your playful fancies stay.
Ah! no pouting; that November
Is no mate for May.

You? you are a lovely creature;
I am weighted with an aim.
How I love each perfect feature!
More than you I value fame?
No, my fairy; but remember——

ESTHER.

'Tis my turn; your fancies stay,
Dear old dreamer. Why? November
Is a mate for May.

MARLOWE. My love, when I remember what I was
Before your influence opened on my life,

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I feel like one escaped the wrecking waves
Wherein less fortunate mortals met their doom.
Ah ! to remember now the misery
In which I late was whelmed, doth chill my soul !
How surged the waters of a thousand ills
Above my panting spirit, as I fought
The threat'ning arm of death back, and the loss
Of my best purposes, so threatened then
By tempest and confusion—awful glooms,
And all the range of terrors ! Ah ! my love,
How welcome is the memory of your light
That shone upon me then, and taught me how
To get a footing on the shore of Time !
Men have told many mighty things of love,
And poets made the world rich with its deeds ;

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But never, since the first man trod the world,
And felt himself a part of something vast,
Did Love perform a greater miracle
Than when he touched your soul with help for me,
And I escaped the darkness.

ESTHER. I did that?
Why, Kit, I scarcely can believe my power
As saving as your language pictures it.
And yet I will, for it is very dear,
The thought that I have been a help to you.
And, Kit, I feel so happy being yours,
And yet so proud of you, my peerless mind!
Oh! teach me how I may become the grace
That your election doth bestow on me.
For when I am alone I murmur forth,
"Can it be true that I, a foolish maid,

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Am chosen by so great a man—his love?"
And then I think how year by year I'll grow
More to deserve you.

MARLOWE. But, my little fool,
What can you do more than you have performed?
You cannot tell what you have done for me;
But when the harvest of my life is plucked,
There will be some result to show your power.
I feel the mighty stirrings of a spirit,
Strong as the forming light o'er chaos thrown,
Grouping within the clearing hemisphere.
I shall do much! Oh! Esther, think of it!
The haunting subjects that await my pen—
The page of history, and the great romance
Scarce less austere, that wait creative art
To make them live and move upon the stage.

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Whole seas, and undiscovered lands of thought,
Great realms of beauty, spaces dreamed not of,
Whose regions never yet were sought by man
Or muse, await me, and you are the star
By which I steer my course to such rare things,
My hope! my fate!

ESTHER. I close my eyes and dream,
So crowd the thick succession of your fancies
Wherein you throne me. But you do forget,
To-night's the farewell supper at the Tabard.
'Tis time for you to go.

MARLOWE. Sweet New Year's eve!
For once I wish that I could break my word.

ESTHER. No, Kit, you must not say so; you must go.
To-morrow, with the new year, we begin
A newer, better life! Go, bid farewell

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To your companions and old life in one.
Then come to me, and hand in hand will we
Seek that new life of possibilities.
'Tis time to go.

MARLOWE. Till then farewell. I go.

(*They embrace.*)

ESTHER. I know your thought. I do not fear for you,
For to my mind you are a sacred thing
That moves within this little room of earth
Exempt from danger.

MARLOWE. I will come again.

(*They embrace again.* ESTHER *stands silent.* MARLOWE *goes out, and directly after re-enters unobserved, looks once more at* ESTHER, *then exit noiselessly.*)

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ACT III. SCENE I

A ROOM IN THE TABARD INN

MARLOWE, HUGHES, NIMBLE, COWLEY, ARMYN, *and various others, people belonging to the theatre and frequenters of the Tabard, both men and women, discovered sitting at tables. Waiters in attendance with dishes and drinks.*

MARLOWE. The stars come forth; the prosy day is dead,
And let its cares die also! Let each one
Respond unto my welcome of you all
With a good appetite—a health to all!
Now shame Gargantua.

ALL. A health all round!

ARMYN. Go on, Sam!

COWLEY. No, I can't.

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NIMBLE. But you must! Let's have the "Seven Wonders" song.

(*Sings.*)

Now there be things cee-les-tial,
An' things tee-res-tial too;
An' there's a debt, you're safe to bet,
We always pay when due.

ARMYN. Let's have Sam's song. Come, Sam, "The Little Tailor."

COWLEY. Come, come, Jack Armyn, who are you a-elbowing? Mind, mind; I can't always command my temper! Answer me my question first. When a man is drowned a' floats head upwards, an' when a woman is drowned she's floating heels upwards: how's that?

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ARMYN. What's that to do with "The Little Tailor"?

NIMBLE. Come, Sam. Order! order!

(COWLEY *sings.*)

There was a little tailor,
A man of rag and thread,
Who sat all day and stitched away
Upon a breeches red.
It was a courtier's breeches,
A courtier tall and fair,
Who took away the tailor's wife,
And left the breeches there.

The tailor said, "Exchange is
No robbery, I ween."
And then he donned that breeches brave
And sought the courtier's queen.

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"Oh, you look brave in red, sir,"
The courtier's lady cried;
"This very day we'll wed, sir,
And I will be your bride."

Chorus.

The courtier hath the tailor's wife,
The tailor hath the breeches;
The courtier's lady is content
To pick the tailor's stitches.

ALL. Bravo!

MARLOWE. Hughes, what time is it?

HUGHES. Upon the stroke of ten.

MARLOWE. The time is passing bravely, and I feel
Unwonted gaiety. Ah! Hughes, to-morrow!

HUGHES. What of to-morrow, Marlowe?

MARLOWE. All! Hughes—all!

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'Twill be the first day in my life! Ah! Hughes,
I think of all the hours we have spent
Here at this board, and as I muse on them
There steals a strain of that old song you sang
In one of my first pieces—sing it now.
'Twas an Egyptian feast-song.

HUGHES. Well I know it.
What makes you think of that?

MARLOWE. (*Calling down the tables.*) Silence!
A song! (*Hughes sings.*)

SONG.

Draw the curtains, bring the lights—
Day is gone at last;
Wine and wit, add your delights,
While outside howls the blast:

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Shut the doors against the world,
And a truce to thinking;
Soon, ah! soon from time we're hurled,
From such feasts, and drinking.

We will feast as gods of old,
While outside howls the blast
Ranging through the heavens cold
Like soul to misery cast:
Draw the curtains, bring the lights—
Life is overpast;
Wine and wit, cease your delights—
Death is come at last.

(*As the last strains of the song die away,* BATEMAN *and* K. BRAWN *enter and seat themselves at the table opposite* MARLOWE.)

MARLOWE. (*Aside, eyeing* BATEMAN *and*

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BRAWN.) I did not think they would be here to-night.

The hour approaches now. (*Aloud*) Well sung, Hughes! Thanks!

(MARLOWE *rises, and, looking round on all present, begins to speak very slowly at first, and after the first few lines with increasing emphasis and dramatic power. All eyes are fixed on* MARLOWE, *and the expression on all the faces shows a sudden change from rollicking abandonment to intense interest, as he proceeds.*)

Friends and companions, I have met you here,
Before I pass from this old life for ever,
To bid you all farewell. I look around,
And as I scan each old familiar face,

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A thousand memories rise of hours and days
That we have spent together, and I feel
Not all insensible to what is passed:
For I have wept and laughed and drunk with you,
Felt noble thoughts, and done ignoble deeds
Within this little kingdom; found some things
Scarce worth the having; and lost others that
No time to come can e'er restore to me,
So great their loss is. Now I bid farewell;
But cannot part from you as he who gives
A common hand-shake and a casual word,
And turning on his heel forgets at once
The one from whom he parted. What is life?
You answer as you estimate those things
It throws you blindly, and I tell you all—

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I who have trod your ways and know them all—
Your life is but the life of beasts—the life
Of those who wilfully destroy their sight,
And then complain of blindness. 'Tis a life
Of common sin against the light you have!
The life of bravos in this point of time!
The life of fools who starve before a feast!
The life of slaves to accident and chance!
The life of those who build their prison walls!
The life of dogs and apes! Have I not proved—
Have I not measured the capacity
Of that which you call life, and while I wore
Its chains of bondage, questioned it, until
I found it nothing? Use your praise or censure;

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I have been honest with you.

(*A pause and silence.*)

Now one toast!

One toast before we part. Fill every glass!

(*All fill their glasses, and stand spellbound.*)

As far as you can do it, humour me
By drinking the success of my "New Life!"

(BATEMAN *and* K. BRAWN *throw down their glasses; the others drink "To the success of* MARLOWE'S *new life," clinking their glasses in a manner signifying the various feelings and passions by which they are actuated.*)

K. BRAWN. Bateman, attend. Two men I have procured
To seize on Esther, as she hither comes
Flying with pity to her Marlowe's side,

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Who by some danger—so I'll make her think—
Is compassed on the sudden. Do not give
The hatred which is dancing in your eye
A shape in words. Beware! And now I go.

(*Exit.*)

MARLOWE. (*Coming over to* BATEMAN'S *side.*)
Bateman, your hand. Let us forget the past.
'Tis our last night together.

BATEMAN. Forget the past!
You canting Puritan! What right have you
The part of censor to assume, and shake
Your judgments on our ears? Our life was yours—
Nay, is. But what is your new life, I pray?
Think you your marriage with a wretched——

MARLOWE. Hold!

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BATEMAN. What! at your word? I will speak——

MARLOWE. If you do,
You do't upon your peril! Once before
You had my answer to that sort of thing.
Dearer than life, than heaven, than all, I hold
That woman, who is life, heaven, all to me!
Consideration is a straw if you
Dare breathe your slander!

BATEMAN. (*Striking* MARLOWE.) Frighten fools, not me!

MARLOWE. Incarnate spirit of slander! What have you done?
The worser Marlowe is not dead in me!
Heaven help me! but——

(MARLOWE *half unconsciously draws his dagger and closes with* BATEMAN.

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BATEMAN *wrenches the dagger from him, and in the scuffle flings* MARLOWE *down and stands over him as the curtain descends.*)

SCENE II

A ROOM IN MARGARET'S HOUSE

A dim light is burning in the room, and ESTHER *is discovered sitting close beside it, sewing.*

ESTHER. I love these hours of quiet in the night,
For here I sit and work upon this gown—
The gown my mother has not seen as yet.
There, she will see it on my wedding day,
And Marlowe too; I could not show it now.

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God pardon me! I hope I am not vain.
How does it look?

(*She holds the gown before her, and surveys it with admiration.*)

How happy I should be!
Only a little time divides me now
From the new year—the new life—the to-morrow. (*Bell tolls.*)
Hark! what is that? They toll the old year out.
I think 'tis time to put my work aside,
And wait for him. Come, Kit, you're very late.
Upon the threshold of another year—
Upon the entrance to another life—
How solemn is the time! I'll pray awhile.

(*She kneels in prayer. A low knocking*

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is heard outside; ESTHER *springs up with a look of terror on her face.*)

What sound is that! My God! I cannot go!

(MARGARET *is heard unfastening the door. Then subdued voices and the shuffling of feet are heard.* ESTHER *stands motionless, in a listening attitude. Suddenly* MARGARET *utters a piercing scream outside.*)

ESTHER. I'll go and find him!

(*As* ESTHER *is rushing from the room,* HUGHES *enters and gently stays her. He is followed by two or three men supporting* MARLOWE.)

HUGHES. (*To* ESTHER.) What! you here? Back, men!

ESTHER. My God! what's this!

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'Tis Bateman's work, I know it! Oh, my God!
Lay him upon this couch—my Kit, my love!
Where is your hurt? I will be gentle——

MARLOWE. Peace.

Esther, forgive me; it is over now.
I felt that I should see you ere the end,
And yet I would they had not brought me here.
My Nemesis undoes your life as well,
And all the love e'er showered upon the world
Cannot absolve remorse upon this brink;
One kiss—one word—and then—— (*Dies.*)

(ESTHER *sinks by the body of* MARLOWE.)

ESTHER. My God! My Marlowe?—dead?

(*A pause.*)

(*A man enters hastily to* HUGHES.)

MAN. Bateman is secured,
And hurried to the gaol for this black deed;

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And Brawn, who ran to call this girl away—
Ere Bateman and his victim came to words,
Upon a false alarm to Marlowe—ta'en,
By those same villains, who were to abduct
The innocent as she passed through the streets—
By fortunate mistake. This was their scheme.
Brawn knew not Bateman's murderous intent
Upon the life of Marlowe.

HUGHES. Who'd believe that!
Silence! she stirs.

ESTHER. (*Very feebly, and in a half-conscious state, laying her head on* MARLOWE'S *neck.*) Our new year's—new life, Kit. (*Dies.*)

(*The New Year's bells burst forth.*)

END OF MARLOWE

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BELPHEGOR

A Harlequinade in Doggerel

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BELPHEGOR

A Harlequinade in Doggerel

PROEMIAL

It whilom was a custom to invoke
One of the Nine, who was supposed to fire
With inspiration, and to raise the croak
Of bards to something infinitely higher.
I ask such aid, yet fear that I may tire
The short-lived flame of poesy, that flashes
In momentary brilliance to the lyre,
Like dark eyes gleaming underneath their lashes,
Burning with passion's glow, as any other ashes.

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Lucretius sings of a sick infant's taste
Being pampered by sweet medicines, which give
Delight and health at once. To sow the waste
Of this vice-blasted star, men sometimes leave
The kernel of their wisdom here to thrive
In an attractive husk that tempts the tooth,
And broken yields us blessings; so we live
By a deception which embraces truth;
Our sad thoughts making still the subjects for our ruth.

Why all this? I should have explained, before
That crude, confounded simile burst in,

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The purpose of my tale. I wish to soar
Above the cloud-rack of this world of sin,
Where higher things than earth or earth's
thought spin
Round that eternal soul whence all things
flowed,
Lost like heaven's warbling bird the skies
within,
Until I have discovered that great road
Which leads to perfect truth, and eased me of
the load

Of burning questions, and consuming
thought
Which fill th' aspiring spirit with despair
When it beholds the wished end it sought
Elude its grasp, and melt away in air—

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When neither lamentation nor strong
prayer
Can wrest the longed-for knowledge from
the skies,
Or from the spirit drive the cloud of care;
While the desire for higher truth outflies
Our crippled hope, and power, struck by a
thousand lies.

I have forgotten the design, my friends—
Its nature I will beg you to suppose;
The book has got a middle and two ends,
My muse has got a wart upon her nose
Which makes her look athwart where'er she
goes:
Lo! on these facts construct your supposi-
tions—

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I wish to lose no friends, nor make more
foes;
We'll understand our relative positions—
You work the matter out, I'll furnish definitions.

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BOOK I

Assist me now, dear maids of poesy,
To let the coloured wings of fancy free,
And unimpeded by the things of earth
Mount the hoar hill of inspiration's birth.
The silent members in the brain unbind,
And to the ordered music of the mind
Bid the warm lay in one harmonious whole
Express the various motions of the soul.

Our tale transports us to the realms below,
Where all that Guido pictured there of woe,
Or Dante dreamed of in his book divine
Of spirits doomed eternally to pine,

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Falls short of the reality of pain,
Which wraps the gloomy sinner—heart and brain;
For justice with untiring energy
Ever receives, but never gets the fee
Of punishment, done for a little crime
Within a passing day of passing time.
By some strange chance it happened that the most
Of those who sought old Charon's lonely coast
Upon a certain time, were spirits hurled
By their wives' tempers to th' infernal world;
And as they passed along into the night,
Their dismal lamentations did affright
The distant hills, and caves of hell's vast bounds,
Where mocking echoes tossed the dying sounds.

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But louder yet and louder pealed the calls
Of those sad husbands o'er the royal halls,
Where Lucifer, with all his chiefs around,
Sat idly pensive, gazing on the ground.
"Oh for a throat of brass!" as Homer cried,
And lungs of something durable beside,
To sing a catalogue of ships and kings,
Their birth and ancestry, with other things.
But oh the virtue in a pint of beer,
With a fresh pipe and good tobacco near,
The only aids to genuine inspirations
When poets soar to most commanding stations!
Now ere our ambling Muse again advance,
Great Lucifer must claim the first full glance.
Upon a throne—a throne of Milton's make
It must have been—the legendary snake

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Arrayed in all the pomp of empire sate ;
About him were the emblems of his state,
While overhead his blood-red flags did meet,
And formed a canopy above his seat.
The arms of hell, engraved upon the throne
In sparkling stones, illuminated shone.
Round Lucifer at proper distance stood
His realm's nobility, and rank, and blood.
There were great captains who had won promotion
In many a distant war and civil commotion ;
And there were statesmen who had been advanced,
Not for their merits, but their wives had glanced
With yielding eyes upon the prince of hell,
And so the husband rose as his wife fell.

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Then there were authors, each a genius born,
With some new wonder from his fancy torn,
But which unhappily no one would read
Save him who did the poor deception breed.
Far in the background stood a various mass
Of what the blue-bloods call the common class;
Sprinkled with freethinkers, republicans,
And dreamers who had formed gigantic plans
Of revolutions, reformations, leagues
Against the world, whose orders, not worth figs,
They would supplant by juster, truer rules,
To guide the vacant lives of Time's arch-fools.
There was that business man who would adorn
God's half-made earth with some huge factory-horn,
Blot the blue sky with stacks of puffing smoke,
And give the world a brick and mortar cloak;

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Upon a banner gleamed his grand device
Beneath a skull and cross-bones—"I suffice,"
While pairs of scales, quart pots, and two-foot rules
Lay round the emblem, argent, worked in gules.
His will was that all culture should expire
Within the blaze of some indignant fire—
That money-lenders, lawyers, snobs, should be
The pillars of his midnight monarchy.
But next the throne stood those stout chiefs in arms
Whose battles oft had sent their wild alarms
Throughout the breadth of heaven. There Minos stood,
Mammon, and Baal, with all th' heroic brood;
Each in the leader's face would read his mind,
But fell back baffled in the task designed.

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In expectation silent thus they stand ;
Then Lucifer, with raised imperial hand,
Waved his host round him, from his seat arose,
And now in speech his anxious thought o'er-
flows.
"Fair ornaments of hell! props of my state!
Since to this dwelling we are driven by fate,
To hold the empire of these hollow shores—
Where the cold storm for ever sweeping roars,
And the wild realms of fire ceaseless cast
Their horrid lights upon the sweeping blast—
Where ice, and flame, the whirlwind, and the
deep
In one wide round of torture ceaseless sweep,
And the loud voice of woe on these sad
plains
Reminds us of an empire built on pains—

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Let us still seek to enlarge our dark domain,
And for that purpose every effort strain;
For in the increase of our power lies
The working of our hate against the skies
From which we fell, driven by superior might
To this weird land of everlasting night.
You all have doubtless noticed how of late
Th' unhappy wretches who have sought our state
Cry out upon their wives, and lay the blame
Of being damned in our eternal flame
Upon their tempers, which like Circe's wine
Transforms a noble man into a swine.
The truth of this I fain would ascertain,
So I may work the knowledge to my gain;
And for that purpose one of you must go
And take man's form—partake his joy and woe,

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Live the combined life of the mind and sense
Clouded with mist, and passions most intense.
A score of years I give him in the flesh,
A princely fortune, and a bride as fresh
As Hebe's self, offering the cup of health
To some young favourite she enjoys in stealth.
And when the term's expired, and he relate
The various fortunes of the married state,
We then can judge the truth of what we hear
From those sad husbands still arriving here.
And thou, Belphegor, gayest of our train,
Who oft has played the part of love-sick swain,
Whose mind is lighter, and whose fancies flow
Still youthful, you are he, methinks, should go
And undertake the work I here propose.
Say, wouldst thou care to wear a suit of clothes?"

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The chief addressed drew nearer to the throne—
The fire of enterprise within him shone—
And, bowing low before the royal one,
In blended pride and modesty begun:
"Almighty Lucifer, whose power and name
Admits no fellow in the book of fame,
The honour that you do me by this task,
More thanks than I can fitly give doth ask;
The worth of any honour we receive
Is judged according to the hands that give—
What can be worthier than this task?—the giver
Transcending all the thought of the receiver.
Gladly this mission will I undertake,
And as a wedded man the trial make."
Ah! rash Belphegor! didst thou then but know

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The various woes through which thou wert
to go,
The rash desire to play the part of man
And run the circle of his narrow span
Had died—or ere you spoke it—from your
soul
Far quicker than it on your fancy stole.
But pride, that most peculiar vice of Hades,
Roused thee to try thy fortune with the
ladies,
And on that veering wind thy hopes were
stayed
When all thy great ambitions had decayed.
Now scarce had their deliberations ceased
When busy preparations for a feast—
At Lucifer's command—with haste were made
Within the pastoral beauty of a glade.

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Oh, for a pen whence fair descriptions flow,
Such as was thine of old, Boccaccio,
Wherewith thou didst create some fair romance
Filled with Italian weather, song, and dance!
Ah! that I could one moment catch the glow
Of Spenser's beauty—Ariosto's show—
That I might form ideal loveliness
From the description of that fair recess,
Where all the subjects of the prince of air,
From torture free, reclined, the cup to share,
And drink success to that adventurous wight,
Belphegor, bravest of the sons of night.
At the vale's end, lost in a forest's gloom,
A cascade's twinkling lights the depths illume,
And all the winds were stirless, while serene
A moony radiance hung above the scene;

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A lazy midsummer of silent flowers
Threw blooms and scents around a thousand bowers,
While hid within the overhanging green
Rich clustering fruits of golden hue were seen,
And 'mid the branch and blossom spread above,
The woodland songsters trilled their songs of love.
A fairer scene beneath a fairer sky
Itself did never image in the eye.
All picturesque the various groups lay round
In song and converse on the mossy ground;
The red wine circles fast, while music lends
Wings to the feet of dancers; foes and friends
Knit by an universal rapture glowed,
And with their joy transformed their fixed abode.

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Some to the sound of unseen magic lyre
Their melting melodies to beauty quire,
While others to the shades of Hellas haste
The sweets of high philosophy to taste,
For learning, music, poesy, and pleasure
Their rich full gifts did lavish without measure.
But, ah! time hastens on, and like a day
This fairy picture melts in gloom away.
O circumstance! thy hands for ever deal
Hard blows at happiness which nought can heal,
For ever shifting like the restless wind
Thy footsteps on our lives are left behind—
Thou sow'st at random seeds of good and ill,
And every life must reap what thou dost till.
The voice of music sleeps within the vale,
And with a sigh the bard concludes the tale.

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The echoing laughter and the cheery call
No more give life unto the festival,
The silence of a grief by all things felt
Along the length'ning avenues doth melt,
And fancy in the air the finished song
Is singing still, the strain it would prolong.
The valley wears remembrance of a joy
Still warm, though dead within the past. The toy
That did so please the fancy is no more,
And solitude the scene is brooding o'er.
Scarce three plutonian days had gone their round,
When on the plains, assembled at the sound
Of shaking trumpet blast and rolling drum,
The numerous hosts of spirits breathless come,

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To see Belphegor for the earth depart,
To sound the shoals and depths of woman's heart.
And now, while silent expectation reigns,
Behold far off upon the shining plains
Great Lucifer our hero lead along
To sound of pipe and burst of choral song.
Arrived at length where stood the burning steeds—
Of the best breed that grazed in Hades' meads—
Which were to bear our hero on his way
Into the regions of exhaustless day,
The great procession stayed—the prince of air
And fair Belphegor, a majestic pair—
One moment bowed, while music made a pause,
And then succeeding came the wild applause,

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Whose strong vibrations to and fro were cast
Through the blank area of that concave vast.
The sound subsides: within the chariot stands—
The tight'ning rein firm grasped within his hands—
Our hero, high resolve within his glance.
And now towards him doth the prince advance;
A world of thought within his bearing spoke,
As with these words the awful calm he broke:
"Go, fair adventurer, to the fields of day—
That all success may crown thy work I pray—
And till the end of twenty changing years
Partake humanities' absorbing fears:
Their joys, alas! are few, and those they have,
Ere you have caught their beauty, seek the grave;

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Therefore I will not puff you up with dreams
Of earthly happiness, such as the themes
Of our sad bards, who err in this, would teach,
But truth's pure fruit alone to you would reach.
So ere we part, my ever-honoured friend,
To my advice awhile your hearing lend.
The world is full of customs and deceits,
And every man is cheated still or cheats;
And though it will offend your honesty,
You must conform unto their policy.
What's right is legal by the force of might,
For fools and bigots stamp out reason's light.
There too hypocrisy, a thriving trade,
Is driving still, and still is amply paid.
But, oh! the magic centre still is gold,
And round the circle ever ceaseless rolled

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Vice, policy, and superstition fly;
And this, too, under Heaven's eternal eye.
Yes, man would hoodwink Heaven, and vainly think
His vice in superstition's night to sink—
Call Him a liar, and blaspheme His plan,
And be as false unto Him as to man.
The story of a judgment yet to be,
When time shall melt into eternity,
And fire and horror like a whirlwind clasp
The failing universe in death's last gasp,
While Heaven's almighty thunders shake the skies,
And at the Trumpet all mankind arise,
Before the face of everlasting Truth,
To answer for their lives with joy or ruth,
Is but a fable coined within the past—
So say earth's knowing ones—and cannot last,

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As human reason with advancing stride
Amid old fallacies makes havoc wide.
If you would therefore thrive, and make a name
To be remembered in the book of Fame,
Or seek the glittering piles of gold to heap,
Or climb aloft Ambition's slippery steep,
Or seek for praise, or woo the form of Pride,
Vice be thy mate—hypocrisy thy guide.
With these, where fortune's tempests never lour,
You may ascend the heights of human power.
But stay—I talk at random—time is brief;
Then to the object of thy mission, Chief,
Be thou but true, and all else shall be well.
So with these parting words I bid farewell."
A moment's silence held the various crowds,
Then in all haste Belphegor sought the clouds.

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His steeds of fire with sounding whip he lashed,
As through the gloomy deep his chariot dashed—
A thing of light amid eternal gloom,
It seemed a planet hastening to its doom.
Far in the shadowy realm of night were cast
Bright beams of splendour as he hurried past;
His flaming steeds in fury higher sprung,
Until to those below, a spark he hung:
Beneath the burning wheel the chaffed air sounds,
And now they pass secure hell's utmost bounds.
Can mortal mind conceive, can poet write,
The mighty scene that on Belphegor's sight
Burst instantaneous, as he left behind
The everlasting prison of mankind,
And o'er the fields of starred immensity
Pursued his rapid course in transport high;

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Where universes—thick as stars inlay
The arching girdle of the Milky Way—
Rose bright as sparkles on the dancing waves,
When 'neath a noonday sun the ocean laves
The coloured sands upon some sleeping shore,
And only echo answers to its roar?
Firmly he stands, to work the well-drawn reins,
And hurries furious o'er the sounding plains,
Until arrived where danger calls for skill
He checks his course, while anxious tremors fill
His cautious soul: through heaven's most dangerous ways—
Most complicated, crowded—now he strays;
Stars rush in fury past him—nought appears
But the vast mass of ever-moving spheres;
Above, below, around on either side
On wings of flame and thunder on they ride,

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An infinite stretch of palpitating life
Whence Nature's forces rise and seem at strife.
The angry comet neared, shone, and passed by,
And disappeared in dim immensity;
While planets ringed with fire, and moons, swept on,
A moment glimmered feebly, and were gone.
Such tracts of splendour, regions vast, and orbs,
Each in their turn Belphegor's mind absorbs.
Swift as a ray of light the chariot flew,
Till entering our system, rose to view
The earth—the bourn to which his course he steered;
And now distinct, seas, mountains, plains, appeared,
And smoking cities dotted o'er the ball
Show where the snakes of vice and darkness crawl;

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Hung high in air he viewed the world below,
Musing on time and nations' overthrow.
He saw where warlike Carthage stood of yore
Which drenched the Romans' land in Roman
gore;
And grey, mysterious Egypt, whence arose
The civilising power which overflows
In the heroic life and thought of Greece
The field, the council, and the sage's peace.
A thousand high imperial scenes passed by
Torn from th' recording scroll of history
Before Belphegor's mind—the scroll of Time
Was open for him, and each classic clime.
Onward again Belphegor urged his way,
Till Rome in all its pride beneath him lay;
With care he grasps the reins, and then from high
He rushes down the bright descent of sky.

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But now our hero's landed on the world,
'Tis time the sails of higher thought were furled.
I long time pondered o'er in secret pride
Some grand description of his heavenly ride.
I saw in fancy mounting ever higher
The prophet's car and snorting steeds of fire;
But that could poorly help the limping wing
Of my descriptive Muse: I longed to fling
Aside the curtains of the universe,
And fix its splendours in my feeble verse.
Next came into my mind that wondrous flight
Through heaven of great Cervantes' hero knight;
But from that page of genius nought I drew,
As down I sat to sketch some fancies new.

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But on. Invisible to mortal ken
Belphegor sought the narrow haunts of men.
One lone attendant spirit had he brought
To be a sort of confidante, he thought,
And play the part of valet, page, postillion,
Or any other—he could act a million.
The steeds and chariot back he sent to hell
Or disenchanted by some wondrous spell—
I can't say which—upon this point the history
Is silent, so I'll leave the thing a mystery.
The next thing in the tale the Muse appals—
A supernatural transformation calls
Her finest powers to eke the story out,
For fear a halting style should breed a doubt
As to its truth—as liars hum and stammer,
And, moved by nature, speak against all grammar.

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Without the city walls our hero sought
The friendly shade of some retired spot,
And hid within the overhanging trees,
Indulged his thought, and spake his reveries.
"And so," he cried, "after long wanderings passed,
I reach the far-famed world of man at last;
Secure, unknown, I tread the classic land
That once with pride all nations could command.
How beautiful! how excellent, divine
In all the light, and power of wisdom, shine
The various parts of this harmonious sphere,
Which fill the mind with thought—the eye, the ear
With beauty and with music! On this side
The sun pours down his glorious beams in pride;

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Upon the other, silent and serene,
The moon and stars light up night's solemn scene.
What infinite variety doth glow
Where'er I look, around, above, below,
Reminding me of scenes and ages flown
When high in heaven I sat a royal throne,
Ere sin could cause an angel to rebel,
Or Lucifer or sad Belphegor fell!
Ah, me! the wise ones of this earth have said
That knowledge is remembrance of things fled;
And so it is, for everything I view
Is but a likeness of some past—not new
As it at first appeared unto my mind,
But a recurrence of degree and kind.

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I must not now lament those climes of light,
Nor yet repine at my abode of night;
Suffice it, for some years I walk the earth
To pine with grief, or else grow fat with mirth;
All that I ask is, that the world of man
May show such beauty as his planet can."

It may seem worse than blasphemy to pity
A devil who was tumbled from heaven's city,
According to the notions of some godly
Self-justified, whose nice distinctions, oddly
Strike one another between fear and duty,
Who have no ear for music, eye for beauty,
Whose lives are worked by bigotry's machine,
Whose worship is a soulless drawled routine,
Whose whole existence like psalms penitential
Is passed—hypocrisy looking reverential.

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My thoughts like idle coins I still keep clinking,
But I am quite a different way of thinking,
And feeling too; for were Belphegor here,
Without his asking I should drop a tear
Of downright blunt, unselfish sympathy—
Not at his fixed eternal destiny,
But at the restlessness that made him tire
O' th' frying-pan to leap into the fire.
We are no judges of what suits us best;
A strong desire awakens in the breast
For something, which somehow we ne'er attain,
Compared to which all other things seem vain,
Until some accident th' illusion clears
And shows us what we panted for for years,
Could we have grasped it, would have proved a curse—
Things unpossessed deemed best, but so in verse.

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Muse ! cease thy humours witty or ironical :
As I have said, the next thing in my chronicle
Will tax the utmost compass of thy skill,
So to my want obedient bend thy will ;
This is a noble subject for fine brains,
Then spare not fact, description, language, pains.

Old monkish artists did their devils draw
With forky tongue, ape's tail, and griffin's claw—
A monstrous composition of remains
Antediluvian, found beneath great plains ;
But for such fancies there is no authority ;
Believers in them now are i' th' minority.
Therefore, let us suppose Belphegor's form
The same precisely, as before the storm
That flung him terror-stricken down below
When Lucifer struck his rebellious blow.

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Some cabalistic sentence half aloud
Belphegor muttered, when a murky cloud
Enveloped both himself and his attendant
An instant, ere they issue forth resplendent.
The cloud divides—within a golden light
Falls on a figure of heroic height;
Erect, and handsome, formed but to command—
A god in bearing did Belphegor stand.
The human from th' angelic form evolved,
The spirit in the breathing man dissolved,
The eternal in a perishable dress
Compelled all hearts its beauty to confess;
While his attendant, like a blooming youth
Within whose mien shone openness and truth,
Attired as page behind his master stands—
Obsequious, waiting on his least commands.
Oh, what a head, Belphegor, didst thou show—

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Such as is rarely granted men below!
A full and well-carved brow of godlike mould
A rich imagination did enfold—
Spoke the mind's breadth and great solidity,
And not so much its quick avidity
To master all things, as an inward power—
Which men call genius, and a heavenly dower—
To comprehend all things, and look through time,
And fly with ease where others fear to climb;
Sublimity of thought, conception grand,
By certain signs upon his forehead stand,
While charity and calm benevolence
Spoke in a face inspiring reverence;
Colossal energy and purpose high
Beamed from his penetrating soul-like eye;
A full, rich mouth, expressive of strong feeling,
Showed still the fancies o'er his spirit stealing;

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While the scarce aquiline nose, and well-formed
chin,
Told the determined will that dwelt within.
Not young enough to rove, too old to dream—
Some seven-and-twenty summers, it would seem,
Belphegor as a man had dwelt on earth,
Judging him by his presence, since his birth.
His dress was princely,—tights of finest silk,
Venetian collar, ruffles white as milk;
A crimson vest, whereon the highest orders
Spoke him a German noble o'er her borders;
A sword, worn both for ornament and use,
From a gold belt hung negligently loose;
While o'er the whole in many an airy swell
A purple cloak in many foldings fell,
Matching the drooping hat, where floating free
A feather waved, badge of nobility.

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Now it so chanced that fortune on that day
Stirred up the Roman youth to sport and play,
The carnival being the prevailing reason
For holiday on that particular season.

At dawn a party sought the selfsame wood,
With hounds and horn, wherein Belphegor stood,
Till separating, tired with the chase,
In straggling parties they the windings trace.
One of the youths—the Count Lorenzo hight,
Having lost the hunt, his comrades out of sight,
Alone with melancholy paces trod
The forest's sound-destroying, spongy sod,
Till, issuing from a shadowy avenue,
Belphegor in his glory met his view.

Belphegor bowed, Lorenzo silence broke,
And thus with graceful manner him bespoke:

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"Fair sir, your unexpected presence here
Gives me fresh hope, and dissipates my fear.
Far have I wandered since the early morn,
Listening to hear my party's sounding horn,
From whom, through accident, disjoined am I,
To wander through this wood debarred the sky.
Pray, have you seen a hunting-party pass,
Or heard the dogs, or huntsman's echoing bass?
In this direction seemed their course to lie,
When their retreating figures left mine eye."

To whom Bephegor: "Gentle youth, but now
Have I arrived a stranger such as thou
To the unequal windings of this grove,
Where fooling shades and mocking echoes rove.
No sight or sound of your companions lost,
Since I have here arrived, my path hath crossed.

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But you look weary with anxiety;
Here sit we down upon this fallen tree,
And after some refreshment, if towards home
Your way you would retrace, I go to Rome.
Think me not over-bold or rashly rude—
I will not on your solitude intrude
Against your smallest wish; so frankly say
If me you choose companion of your way?"
"Sir," said Lorenzo, as he sat him down,
"To all that question's needless, save a clown—
True hearts and gentle minds are ever free
To kindred spirits and society;
Therefore my thanks accept for what you offer,
And may it be my chance the like to proffer
Upon some near occasion, but to prove
How Count Lorenzo, like a champion's glove,
Values such friendship, honesty, and love."

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This said, Belphegor by his magic art
A richly furnished banquet bade to start
Before them on the turf; yet did it seem
Not the effect of magic, or a dream
Unto Lorenzo—he but saw a page
Nimble, and merry far above his age,
Go to a sumpter mule no feeds could pamper,
And thence unstrap a very spacious hamper.
Then too Lorenzo noticed by its side
Two neighing steeds whose nostrils swelled with pride,
Which, judging to belong unto his friend,
He squared himself, and let his wonder end.
Now to the banquet fell they with good will,
To fortune and the gods their cups they fill,
To one another next with joyful greetings,
And last to accidents which cause such meetings.

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Like Rabelais, they only drank at first
Just to prevent a future rage of thirst,
Until inspired with hatred 'gainst the same—
As though they wished to quench its very name—
They drank and drank from sheer antipathy
Against all thirst, and showed no sympathy
Towards the wine or their drowned throats to prove it.
What enmity 'gainst thirst! no drink could move it.
The page attendant still flew fast, and faster,
Until he sweat all over like a plaster.
Still as they drank their hearts grew warm and light,
And friendship grew as Bacchus showed his might.

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O wine! our ruffled cares thou smoothest down—
Put'st wit and kindness in the dullest clown—
Giv'st youth, and hope, and fancy easy reins
To gallop o'er imagination's plains—
Open'st the heart and purse, mak'st fancy free,
And cast'st o'er all the glow of liberty.
What fugitive looks back and stays his flight?
Who of the morrow thinks that's drunk to-night?
All pleasures must be purchased by some pain,
And there is loss attached to every gain,
So evidently seemed to think our friend,
Until he very wisely made an end,
Before the wine had toppled o'er the brain,
Or efforts of the tongue or legs proved vain.

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So as they rose the page packed up to start,
And now the three from that cool glade depart;
And as they reached the forest's utmost end,
Thus spoke Lorenzo to his new-found friend:
"Before us see where Rome at distance lies,
Lit by the glory of the evening skies—
The everlasting city whose great story
Still fills the mind with dreams of power and glory,
Whose history is written o'er the earth,
Whose spirit still exists as at its birth,
Whose civilising genius still doth soar
Wherever realms arise or oceans roar.
There lies our goal, but quick-descending night
Methinks necessitates a quicker flight;
This is a dangerous road when wakes the owl,
Where freebooters and hired assassins prowl.

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Think me not too inquisitive, I pray,
But at what part of Rome, sir, do you stay?
If you go on unto the other end,
Pray you accept the lodging of a friend.
Within the gates my house stands; there to-night
With welcome rest until returning light,
When I will guide you safely to your part,
And see you safely anchored ere depart."
The page here coming up gave each a steed,
Of which Lorenzo certainly had need;
Then holding in their heads lest they should rear,
He backed his mule, and so brought up the rear.
In answer to Lorenzo's speech, our hero,
Who was no daylight sham or pagan Nero,

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Having drawn rein to bring their steeds together,
Began to talk as fair as May-day weather:
" Know, Count Lorenzo, that I am a ranger,
To Italy and Rome I am a stranger;
No friend my coming waits within yon wall,
No welcome gleams from tavern, hut, or hall;
And, save yourself, with none in Italy
Have I expressed myself so frank and free:
Therefore my thanks receive, and just to show
How I appreciate such kindness, know
That I accept your offer, noble Count,
As gladly as a Turk a breech doth mount;
For by my soul you are a proper fellow,
And far more open than a man more mellow.
With me to sit or walk, sir, be not shy,
Knight of the holy Roman Empire, I !—

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A German prince to boot—but hark'ee, mind,
No begging, hungry rat—my purse is lined
As well as any robbers'—king, or pope,
And than them all I have a longer rope.
I say not this in friendly boast or jollity,
But just to show I am the proper quality;
And since I have so far my secret shown,
I don't care if the whole to you is known.
Though I but lately have ta'en up to roam,
I'm growing tired, and fain would make a home
For a few years within this pleasant land,
Which Nature benefits with plenteous hand.
My state and princely matters are in charge
Of one who might command the world at large;
So that I feel no trouble on that score,
With such a strong-armed man before my door."

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It may seem strange that such a knowing devil
As our Belphegor scorned all maxims civil,
Political, or moral, thus to tell
All his affairs upon a sudden swell
Of friendship—'gainst all laws of all the world,
Whose hot contempt on openness is hurled.
'Twas certainly a slight on mankind's knowledge,
Which showed he graduated at a college,
Better or simpler, than humanity,
Or else he was a victim to insanity.
Be close, know all from others, but tell nought—
These are the three grand rules the world hath taught:
A kind of fence by conscience-stricken man
Erected, from his philanthropic plan

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Of legal, custom-sanctioned crime and error,
To keep without those who would strike such
terror
To the closed hand and heart of a society
Like Joseph's coat—all evils in variety.
O youth! thy beauty does not fade so soon,
Time does not rob thee of thy godlike noon;
The light of hope, the fire of enterprise,
Die not so quickly from thy rolling eyes,
As confidence and frankness leave the heart
Where cunning and suspicion rankly start;
Then while a lying world thy best thoughts slay,
God's image passeth from thy soul away.
But on Belphegor's part there was no cause
Why he should try dissimulation's pause,
And hum and stammer what he longed to say,
So to his mark he ran the shortest way.

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Beside, Belphegor, being a spirit of air,
Could baffle all endeavours foul or fair,
To take advantage of his confidence,
So that he was secure in every sense.
"Fair sir," Lorenzo said, "I cannot tell
The largeness of the joys that in me swell
At your intelligence—I only know
My wishes with your own intentions go.
With your permission, I myself will see
To all things that become your dignity.
I know a noble palace that commands
A glorious prospect—set in ample lands,
Where the whole night the tender nightingale
Sends its sweet music dying down the vale,
And the long days from noon till twilight's hours—
Heavy with drowsy sounds and fragrant flowers—

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Make up a golden dream of rest sublime,
Hung in the brain of the enchanted time.
This, being the seat of a stern race of old,
The present heir will instantly have sold,
Having drunk his fortune up, or, as some say,
Devoured the calf while in the cow it lay.
However, we can go and view the place;
And if it suits your present state and case,
My steward, who's a cunning-dealing chap,
Could settle all the business in a rap."
With thanks and offers, offers, thanks, suggestions,
But few inquisitive or puzzling questions,
The party reached the walls, and passed the gate,
Just as the warders thought 'twas getting late,

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And parting lovers sought their lonely beds,
And tavern gallants brawled with aching heads,
While crime and lust and fear, with footsteps
light,
Walked here and there beneath the hood of
night.
Ah! night, dread season, when conspiracy
Grasps the sharp brand and turns the noiseless
key—
When burning Rape stifles his victim's shriek,
And watching Murder scarcely dares to speak—
When armies steal upon the slumbering foe,
And bid them sleep for ever by a blow!
What sights Belphegor witnessed as he cast
His eyes around him as he onward passed!
Thoughts crowded on his mind a dismal train,
He almost thought he was in hell again.

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But now, arrived within Lorenzo's hall,
For lights and pages every one doth call.
Confusion, noise, and bustle everywhere
Made our philosopher Belphegor stare;
For each and all seemed no clear plan pursuing,
Each one did nought, while each the whole seemed doing.
Superior minds love order—nought will tell
The characters of men one half so well,
As in life's smallest details—neat design,
Where method domineers with rule and line.
To such, confusion and disorder are
Opposed as foes in everlasting war.
Belphegor was an order-loving soul,
So with contempt he looked upon the whole.

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A burst of music seemed to shake the ground,
And die in wailing voices all around;
Fair girls who had their shame and honour sold,
And lustful pages glittered o'er with gold,
Flew here and there as fast as they were able,
And laid the necessaries on the table.

Homer, and many more, are great at telling
Just how their heroes feed, on each point dwelling
That's needed for a true descriptive gorging;
But I'm not up to this, so won't go forging.
Suffice it that they feasted on the best,
And getting drunk both rambled off to rest,
All dreams but disconnected fragments scorning,
And waking with a headache in the morning.

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The traveller strapped the saddle on his nag,
The watching sentinel began to fag,
The nightly student lay in feverish sleep,
The absent lover but awoke to weep,
The lazy priest awoke to eat and drink,
The broken spendthrift raised himself to think,
The lonely artist rose to dream of fame,
The ruined maiden on her blighted name,
The weary millions woke to sweat and toil,
The pampered lords of wealth began to spoil ;
In short, the soldiers marching from the fort,
The outbound vessels sailing from the port,
The opening taverns, and life's eager run,
Showed that another day had just begun
To tempt the world with many a specious vanity,
Of which the whole monopoly holds humanity.

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This is a strange description of the morn—
'Tis just the last thing in the fancy born;
So as I have an independent mind,
That I will never to old models bind,
With servile fear which ne'er became a bard,
I cast them all aside without regard.
I shun the old and modern way of narrative,
To spite some critics, men of minds comparative.
Nor do I trouble to possess that skill
To rub and polish up a verse, until
The strength of the original is gone,
While limpid commonplace keeps rippling on.
Instead of thinking once, and altering twice,
And scribbling down your nonsense in a trice,
Think ten or twenty times, until you feel
Your mind's command o'er all the subject steal.

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List, artists of rare form ! things so expressed
Need little altering—they are at their best.
  Think many times, write once, and it will save
    you
From dilatory habits, which enslave you
With fevers of high finish and retouching,
And teach you not to keep on ever clutching
At one poor flower of fancy you are dandling,
Lest it should wither up with too much
    handling.
Some will lament the absence of perfection,
And point out faults in genius' best erection,
And think we must eternally keep chipping
To make more perfect—not a wasp's sting
    skipping.
This Chinese ingenuity will do
For people who have time to bear it through,

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But I'm afraid the world would not advance
In straining for this needless excellence;
Besides, by every logical conclusion
Originality would meet confusion.

All praise, ingenious critics, unto you,
Who through a telescope our roughness view—
Who turn the small end of the glass to spy
Our beauties, which shrunk up at distance lie—
You Goths and Vandals, who with heavy hand
Write down all minds you cannot understand—
Blue flies on folly's cesspit daubed in mire,
Who lie for wages and who damn for hire.
Gods! was it for such things the world was made?
I ask, when assdom is a thriving trade.

Lorenzo, having wakened from his slumber,
Began with hurried hand his beads to number;

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Scarcely remembering whether yesterday
Was but a dream, he had begun to pray,
Till recollecting gradually all,
He smiled, and let his useless rosary fall.
How many prayers like his are winged with air!
How many others selfishness doth rear!
How much of supplication is despair!
How much of everything is false as air!
The world is but one long unjust complaint,
Yet every man unto himself's a saint.
Lorenzo next to see Belphegor goes,
Which gentleman, having slipped within his clothes,
Took his host's arm, and both together walked
Into the garden, where they laughed and talked.

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Reciprocating greetings, they would crop
The hope that each had slumbered like a top.
And as they gazed on Rome beneath them lying,
Belphegor spoke the thoughts for utterance crying:
"What noble prospects meet the wandering eye
Where'er it turns its gaze beneath the sky!
Benevolence speaks in the whole design,
And nought is common, everything divine.
See where the Tiber in its beauty glides
With its fair tribute to the far-off tides.
Lo! temples, palaces, and to the right
The Colosseum rising in its might,
Reposing in their dreamy strength and beauty,
Like energies wrapped in the soul of duty,
Or, as they stand out beautifully defined,
Like thoughts reposing in some godlike mind.

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The winds in airy waves the clouds have furled,
And there they stretch away beyond the world,
Where all is distance, and their shapes decay
To melt around the chariot of the day.
Language is insufficient for the thought,
For man himself has not a language taught
Equal to the expression of such splendour,
Which proves him against heaven a rank offender.
Puffed with ingratitude he snores supine,
A goat in lust, in grovelling mind a swine;
While all unheeded stands the lovely world,
And the vast stars in mazy circles hurled."

Belphegor, though a devil hither sent,
On mission diabolical intent,
Was more religious, in his own strange way,

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Than many a man who does, or does not, pray.
Besides, when he assumed the form of man—
I can't say how it happened—he began
To feel just like we do ourselves, or should
feel,
Though some may think no possible change
e'er could heal
The proper devil, which lay crouched within,
Wrapped in its everlasting husk of sin.
As man, Belphegor was upright, sincere,
Honest, and open—to himself severe,
The very paragon of chivalry,
With heart and spirit, like his motions, free.
So that, dear reader, following this tale,
Look not for our Belphegor's claw or tail;
In his unfortunate history you must see
Only the man sunk in man's misery.

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If there is an exception to this case,
I'll tell you of it in the proper place.
Lorenzo thought his friend a mighty scholar;
Uneasily he straightened down his collar,
And, though not envious, like all mankind
He did not relish being so outshined.
So he began, as loud as empty bottles,
To talk of Homers, Platos, Aristotles;
He praised Thucydides and Xenophon,
And criticised the poets every one,
Spoke highly of the ancient civilisations
When Egypt and Assyria ruled the nations;
He praised the architecture of the Greek—
Praxiteles made statues almost speak,
Apelles would have been the cream of all
Did later times his genius forward call.

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And then he spoke of Rome and Roman writers—
Of Cicero and many great reciters;
Maro was wonderful upon the whole,
And Livy had a comprehensive soul;
But Tacitus was far above the rest,
Profound and great—at everything the best.
So on a sudden start our count exploded,
Shot the small charge with which his brain was loaded,
And, like all youthful egotists that talk,
After the end stood silent as a stock,
Pretending to be pondering deeply o'er
Some cleverer thing than he had said before.
Belphegor, who saw through him, gently bent
His head and smiled, and then to breakfast went.

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Lorenzo, having some business to be done,
Left our Belphegor for a while alone
Within his garden, till he should return;
When both would go the palace view, and learn—
His steward with them—for what sums of gold
It by its reckless owner would be sold.
Belphegor nursing vagrant fancies strayed
Far through the shadowy trees and deep'ning glade,
When suddenly a figure met his sight
Of reverend mien, and more than human height;
His snowy beard of patriarchial length,
His active eye, which spoke of mental strength,
Belied each other—one the mask of eld,
While all the glow of youth the other held.

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It stopped and spoke: " Belphegor!—do not start
Because I have your name so pat by heart—
I know you and your mission to this sphere,
Therefore unto my purposed speech give ear.
All things upon this earth, life's prose and rhyme,
Are under my dominion—I am Time:
Though subject to eternal laws elsewhere,
You live beneath a mortal fortune here;
All powers which as a devil you may have
To make obedient nature your will's slave,
Even from this passing moment fall away—
You are as other men, no more than they.
Your magic powers you can wield no more;
The money that you have is all your store;
You can add nothing to it now, I wis—
It is a princely fortune as it is.

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Nor must you here expect immunity
From human suffering, and calamity.
And now, ye shadows, who attendant wait—
By Heaven ordained so—round my throne of state,
Appear before Belphegor's wondering eye,
And claim him as your own while passing by."
Immediately Time turned, and waved his hand,
With that majestic and sublime command
Which monarchs exercise, when they support
Their dignity before some trembling court;
And instantly before the pair appear
The powers that strike man's heart with awe or fear.
First Circumstance came gliding slowly past,
With eyes to earth and hands to heaven cast;

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A picture borne before him, where men see
Idleness scorning opportunity.
Upon his helmet sculptured out in gold
The tale of Atalanta's race behold;
While in his rear another picture showed
Regret sink fainting 'neath the weary load
Of a lost past, which memory still would gild
Each day, until Remorse's heart was filled.
A troop of lovers, fools, and summer flies
Of mankind, follow with lamenting cries.
Then on came Chance, a reckless charioteer,
Whose steeds would forward gallop, start, and rear.
Plagues, inundations, earthquakes, wars, and pain,
His careless hand upon the earth did rain.

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All nature trembled as he forward flew,
And even Time, for fear, his breath scarce drew.
The Passions next passed by—a painful dream
They make in life's sad sleep, reigning supreme—
Led by Intemperance, whose feeble pace
And bloodshot eye bespoke his wretched case.
There Envy strode admiring what it scorned,
And Love all woe o'er far-off prospects mourned.
There Hate his bloody knife did shake in air,
And trembling Fear with terror tore his hair.
There Jealousy with madness in his eye
Fed on the poison dooming him to die;

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While all the dreary shapes of unnamed woe,
Which fall upon this wretched globe below,
With their concomitants were seen to pass
Like images in Plato's caverned glass.
Madness with whip of scorpions came behind,
And lashed them onward, stung, confused, and blind;
While Horror and Despair, close overhead,
Filled them with an unutterable dread.
Then came a figure with a torch aflame,
And Superstition was the demon's name,
Though some have called it Faith; but that's all one
To men who could not judge 'tween Mary's Son
And that Barabbas who defiled the earth—
Freedom for wrong, the cross for truth and worth!

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Enthusiasm did his footsteps steer,
While Persecution followed in the rear.
Another phantom, human Fallacy,
With an insinuating step stole by.
The Sins came after, full of boisterous glee,
And filled the air with shouts of revelry.
Pride, in a golden car by peacocks drawn,
In haughty majesty passed o'er the lawn;
Her foot upon a globe, her head on high—
Contempt within her curling lip and eye—
By turns she shook defiance at the skies,
And shot to earth the lightnings of her eyes.
Kings held her robe, and e'en Religion stood
A willing slave obedient to her mood.
Next Covetousness, with bags of golden store
Nursed an eternal feverish wish for more;

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With all the wealth of earth within his hand
He wanders ceaseless o'er the sea and land,
Searching the beggar's bag, the purse of lord,
For one small coin dropped from his boundless
hoard.

Then Lust, upon a goat with eyes of flame
Dragging a maiden after, forward came;
His victim's shrieks made music in his ears—
His rapture lay in knowledge of her fears;
While Scandal and Derision followed after,
And filled the heavens with most unholy
laughter.

An emblem of the apple plucked by Eve
A host of Imps to thronging thousands give,
Who with indecent gestures full of meaning
Passed on, their shame and passion never
screening.

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Mothers their daughters, maids their honour
sold,
While Lust showered lavishly his cursèd gold.
Anger with clenchèd fist and teeth firm set,
With brother's blood the lonely earth did wet,
While Bloody-mindedness with scorpions' stings
Pierced his wild brain and shook its sable
wings.
Cursing and blows lay heavy on the air,
And Murder woke with a delighted stare.
Then Gluttony came riding on a swine,
Gorging himself on dainties, drunk with wine;
And when he could nor eat nor drink aught
more,
He vomited his meal upon the floor,
And then set to again, still more voracious,
To fill his vacant paunch so lank and spacious,

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Then by came Envy, cavernous and pale,
Whose look insinuated half a tale;
But as she is put down among the Passions,
I won't enlarge her native tricks and fashions—
With moralists a passion, priests a sin,
She takes the part of devil's harlequin.

Last followed Sloth with Sleep, and Poverty,
Drawn in a car by Want and Misery,
While Fortune jeered his state, and Enterprise
In scorn before his drooping eyelid flies.

Death stood aloof; but onward came a crowd
With shrieks of pain, and jests, and language loud,
The multitudinous unnamed progeny
Of those that moved before Belphegor's eye,
Whose natures in their motion and their look
Were written quite as clear as in a book.

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When all this Lord Mayor's show of a procession
Had passed, Belphegor's hopes began to freshen;
For such a spectacle was quite enough
To shake a hero's nerves, however tough.
Each, as they passed him by, had cried with glee,
"Belphegor, I have full command o'er thee!"
So when this pantomime was at an end
A little puff of wind the heavens did send,
Which blew these airy beings clean away,
Like summer clouds or ocean's melting spray.
And while the morning light lay on the land
Before Belphegor, Time did take his stand;
And as his shadowy hand he forth did reach,
He thus began a sort of farewell speech:
"Now, my fair sir, you see what man lives under;
So above all things don't provoke the thunder,

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Let prudence guide your actions, do your best,
Feed well, and laugh, and leave to heaven the rest.
Don't learn to live by studying how to die,
But take the winged moments as they fly;
Regret no past, nor hope a future day,
Be doing—life admits of no delay."
Ere a clock could strike one, Time too had fled;
Belphegor felt like standing on his head;
He almost laughed aloud, he nearly wept,
And afterwards with rapture danced and leapt,
Just as a man, awoke from evil dream,
Laughs at the thing that did so real seem.
Humanity's a coward filled with fear,
And dares not in its darker nature peer;
Those who have torn its dreadful mask aside
For their presumption like Prometheus died.

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'Tis good to know the cause of a complaint;
To draw a sinner cannot harm a saint;
Deformity, though hid, is still the same—
You cannot change a thing with change of name;
Therefore I wonder why such simple truth
Has set on edge the world's susceptive tooth.
Would not man's wisdom be the better shown
By making all the works of darkness known?
For by that means man soon would learn to know
The subtil shapes of hell, though they should go
Attired as God's especial sons of light,
To dazzle and confuse the dubious sight.
Denial cannot kill the thing denied,
Fear of disclosure persecutions hide.

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The Count Lorenzo joined our hero now,
Joy in his eye and hope upon his brow,
And led him forward to the future home
That he had chosen for him there in Rome.
Through mighty Lucifer's paternal care
Belphegor was a real millionaire.
It is beyond the power of man to tell,
How one who empty-handed came from hell
Possessed so large a fortune in a night,
But so it was; and when the morning light
Peeped through Belphegor's casement, he arose,
And donned his new-born fortune with his clothes.
Great interests had he, Genoa! in thy trade;
He had a hundred bank-books ready made,
He had invested in great companies,
His argosies rode on the curling seas—

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He'd lent this prince great sums to make a
war,
He'd paid another's debts, and from afar
He ruled the distant regions of the globe,
An universal king without the robe.
Belphegor and Lorenzo passed along,
The admiration of the Roman throng,
Until above a noble grove of trees
A palace's fair towers Lorenzo sees,
And pointing with his sword in the direction
Belphegor saw a most superb erection.
They passed the gate unchallenged by the guard,
And sauntering lazily across the yard
The palace entered, sought a distant hall
Where sat the careless spendthrift lord of all;
Lorenzo's steward mending an old quill
Sat in a high-arched Gothic window-sill.

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The master of that palace, Raphael hight,
Thought very little of his luckless plight;
For there he sat, a wine-flask in his hand,
Endeavouring in vain to understand
The points of law concerning a conveyance,
A tenure, and so forth, but in abeyance
Of the old steward's arguments gave a yawn
Which very plainly said—Right, friend, go on.
But when he glanced Lorenzo and his friend,
Unto the legal talk he put an end,
By hastily advancing them to meet,
While he upset the wine-flask at his feet.
"Sit, sirs," said Raphael—"pardon me, be seated!
You doubtless think it odd to be so greeted—
Confound the flask! Good steward, ring the bell
To bring more wine. Here, you can do as well—

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You know the cellar; go and get the keys,
And help to set these gentlemen at ease;
No doubt the butler's drunk enough by this.
'Tis time to sell the place—all goes amiss.
Good sirs, be seated: what a world we live in
Of stealing, plotting, lying, thriving, giving,
Damning our souls for little piles of dross,
And never thinking of the eternal loss.
However, I'm determined once for all
To shun damnation ere too far I fall,
By shifting off the cause of the temptation
In selling up this mansion and plantation."
"Dear Raphael," said Lorenzo, "pardon me
For trenching just now on your privacy;
This is the Count Belphegor, whom I named
To you an hour ago—a scholar famed

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Throughout the world, whose wish to settle down
Has brought him to this corner of the town."
Raphael, though double-sighted at the time,
Was yet a gentleman of manners prime;
So towards Belphegor with extended hand
He tried to walk, though scarcely fit to stand,
And mumbling something about youthful charms,
He locked Belphegor in his clasping arms.
Belphegor said how pleased he was to see him,
And also how he willingly would free him
From his ancestral home. "For," said our friend,
"I understand, Lord Raphael, you intend
To leave your native Italy afar,
And under a more cold and northern star
To seek adventures 'neath the flag of war.

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Fame is a mighty magnet to the spirit,
And what ennobles man like love of merit!
Let peasants talk of quiet life and grave,
And think with joy of cold oblivion's wave,
The noble mind dreads nothing like the thought
Of dying like a brute, and being forgot.
O fame! ambrosia to the sense of Time,
Thou death of envy, birth of poet's rhyme,
Refiner of the thoughts and hearts of men,
Without thee, all the world were but a den
Where selfishness and death hold gloomy sway,
Sole gods of ant-hill earth's small round of clay.
Fame is the spur that mounts us from the earth,
And conquers death by giving man new birth."
Belphegor timed his speech to suit the mood
Of Raphael, and straight that hero's blood

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Caught emulative fire at what he said;
For to his brow more frequent came the red,
While the compelling fancy of his brain
Made him act tales of glory o'er again.
Lorenzo and his steward stood apart,
Exchanging winks to see what sort of start
The business seemed to get, and now and then
One pulled the flask while t'other scraped the pen.
Gold, that great seneschal with glittering mace,
Doth motion every mortal to his place
According to his pocket, and behind
Elbows away all character and mind.
Gold bribes the world, and at its back stands death,
Sole dominator o'er our little breath,

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Makes conscience all subservient to success,
And treads the way to heaven in purple dress.
Men bow to various gods, but one, behold,
Which they in common worship—it is gold!
Ah! gold, thy worship knits all lands together,
Despite their customs, governments, or weather!
All praise to thee! thou grand material god,
At whose commanding and majestic nod
The continents, and oceans of this ball
Before thy throne their richest gifts let fall.
I beg you, gentle reader, to suppose
The business of the bargain at a close.
On Fancy's pinions let your minds be borne
To the Pope's palace on the second morn
After Belphegor's bargain had been made,
And you shall see the Church in dress parade.

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There sat the Pope with a vermilion nose,
Indulging in a little quiet doze,
After the noise and racket of the night
Which left his holiness in wretched plight.
The waving censers and the jingling bells,
The lordly cardinals pouring from their cells,
The white-robed choir, the fans, and holy water,
Made such a useless noise, and swell, and sputter,
That—well, Belphegor, smoke-proof as he was,
Said in a whisper, that he found more cause
For stopping both his ears and coughing well
Than e'er he had occasion to in hell.
The Pope arose, supported on each side,
And after having leisurely eyed
The group before him, yawned and winked apace,
And coughing softly thus began the case:

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" Lord Raphael, answer on your Christian word,
And swear upon the cross-bar of your sword,
Is it your free wish, and your will alone,
That your estates another lord should own?"
Then Raphael answered: " Father, it is so;
'Tis my desire to sell up all and go;
To roam abroad is proper to the Roman,
And if I stay at home I shall be no man.
Oh! let me fly from this accursed place—
I do not mean this court, your holy grace—
To where activity, and noble strife
Shall call my better spirit back to life."
Then spoke the Pope again: " Count—what's
your name?—
Belphegor?—Ah, 'tis so—the very same.
No doubt you have been told this great estate
Is held in vassalage of our holy state,

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Being purchased of a pope by its first lord
Ages since, as our registers record,
On this condition, that its owner's power
Should succour us in need and evil hour;
This being known, pronounce if 'tis your will
Its offices and honours to fulfil!"
Belphegor answered: "That is my desire.
What useless rigmaroles mankind require
In settling up so small a thing as this!
Are pomps and forms and talk man's highest bliss?
You knew I was about to buy the place,
You knew too each particular of the case,
Because the Count Lorenzo's steward wrote
Explaining all things to you in a note;
Yet here you choose to catechise my friend,
And me: forbear—and let this fooling end.

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I am a student of philosophy;
And though I do desire man's ways to see—
His manners, customs, laws, religions, states—
Yet I must tell you nothing my soul hates
Like mummery, civil or ecclesiastical:
I'm a philosopher, and not fantastical."
The court turned pale with awe and terror then,
While thoughts of blasphemy, and doomèd men
Ran through the minds of all. The Pope arose;
His anger dyed a deeper hue his nose:
"I was not ignorant of that which brought
You hither, sir; and your irreverent thought
Upon the holy scruples of the law,
Is quite enough my curse on you to draw:
I could deny you paradise and bliss,
And send you down below for less than this."

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"Oh! oh!" Belphegor cried, "a fool and jest!
I wonder, if we put it to the test,
Who best could send his fellow down below?
I'll have a try, so mind your holy toe!"
Straight as he spoke appeared a wondrous sight:
Belphegor's body dead, or faint with fright,
Fell heavily upon the holy floor;
While with a shattering and infernal roar
A real devil, spick and span, complete,
Stood staring at the Pope from head to feet.
His gaze was for a moment—woes of woes!
He seized the holy Father by the nose,
And then with might and main began to try
With such a load of sin away to fly.
The Pope, quite mad with agonising nose,
Struck right and left his apostolic blows;

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But all in vain—he might have struck away
Until the evening of the last great day—
The devil had him slung upon his back
In act to bear him down th' infernal track,
When, acting on a sudden thought, he threw
His burden right amid the priestly crew,
And shouted scornfully: "I were a fool
To take so good a teacher from our school.
Why should I seek to carry you away?
We're sure of you—you are our certain prey,
And you can render us more service here
By nursing antichrist, with crime and fear.
We only fish for neutral souls, who stand
'Midway 'twixt us, and heaven's desirèd strand;
We shake no trees, nor through their branches
crawl,
Because we know when ripe the fruit will fall."

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The devil vanished in sulphureous smoke,
The Pope arose, Belphegor then awoke,
The whole assembly crossed themselves in wonder,
And stared in silence like men struck with thunder.
Some ancient chroniclers, in telling o'er
Belphegor's actions, feel a little sore
In writing his encounter with the Pope;
Maintaining that it comes not in the scope
Or matter of true history, but a fable
Based doubtless on the tale of Cain and Abel.
But there are others who believe it true,
And back it up with reasons old and new.
Although Time stripped Belphegor of his powers,
Yet every day our hero had six hours,

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Wherein his supernatural powers would still
Obey the merest dictates of his will.
This is a reason most advanced by many,
And doubtless it is just as good as any.
'Tis also said Belphegor had been drinking,
And that, whene'er he did so, in a winking
His power came back; but there is one old writer
Who, it would seem in hate of Peter's mitre,
Says that the Pope to quit the devil's hold
Did worship him, as Ahab did of old.
The most religious writers of the fact
Say that the tale with evidence is backed,
And prove to every erring creed and land
That the miraculous age is still in hand.
But now, the ceremony at an end,
Young Raphael bids adieu unto his friend,

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The papal court dissolves, the lawyers wink,
The churchmen whisper, while the Pope doth drink.

Lorenzo takes Belphegor by the arm,
Which action, acting on him like a charm,
He shakes himself, and laughing at the whole,
Swears that the world has got a humorous soul.

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